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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000475

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S, AF/E
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [AU](#) [INSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SE GRATION'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR
GHAZI SALAHADDEEN

REF: A. KHARTOUM 470
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 469
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 468

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the President's Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration, NCP-insider and Presidential Advisor Dr. Ghazi Salahadeen lauded the SE's mission to improve ties with Sudan while seeking improvements in the situation in Darfur and CPA implementation. He was less supportive of SE Gration's call to reverse the decision on the thirteen expelled International NGOs, but said the regime is willing to work with the UN to find a way to limit the impact of the expulsions. SE Gration said that he will work with the UN to develop a proposal on NGOs that effectively addresses humanitarian aid gaps and allows the regime to save face. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) Meeting with SE Gration, USSS Tim Shortley, CDA Fernandez, and emboffs on April 2 in Khartoum, Presidential Advisor and NCP intellectual Dr. Ghazi Salahadeen said that the time is ripe for improving US/Sudan relations and offered his support to SE Gration in his mission to find a political way forward. He told Gration that the regime is looking forward to the realization of President Obama's principles of change, promising "I can assure you of our cooperation." He called President Obama election an "auspicious moment" for improving US/Sudan relations and said that "with determination, it has the potential to be a success story." After SE Gration outlined his vision to establish a long-term road-map to resolve the Darfur and CPA issues and normalize bilateral relations after we succeed, Salahadeen commented, "What you are saying is music to my ears and has the potential to positively impact Sudan and the region at large."

[1](#)3. (C) Salahadeen noted that improving relations will be a challenge as many in the NCP believe that Sudan has not gained from its strategic engagement with the US. "We have failed time and again to put relations on track. In the past ten years, we have come across diplomats who had similar intentions, but Sudan is still a pariah in the eyes of some, and remains designated as a State Sponsor of Terror despite our intelligence cooperation. Our relations are encumbered with a lot of baggage which tends to introduce an element of suspicion which we have to get over and we will need to tread cautiously at the beginning." He noted, however, that there is a strong desire within the regime to find a way out of this malaise and improve ties with the US. "We need to be

hopeful. We don't hate you, we actually admire you. We see your films, read your books, study your history. We have strong objections to the way you conduct your politics." He believes that Sudan has benefited from strong US engagement in the past, notably the CPA, which he identified as the regime's "greatest achievement"

¶4. (C) Salahadeen sought to raise an attractive specter of improved relations by painting a tantalizing picture of Sudan, a "big and rich country, in resources and people, a regional power in many terms which borders nine countries and has access to the Red Sea." He said the key to SE Gration's success will be President Bashir's response. "Make your visit have the best impact it can on the Big Man. The President has been indicted, maligned and abused. Let's hope that this visit will have the right impact on him. He is already well-disposed."

¶5. (C) On Darfur, Salahadeen said the regime is unfairly characterized as indifferent towards the suffering of IDPs, but argued that the impact of the Darfur conflict has been exaggerated and politicized. "Do not make wrong assumptions that the GoS is so callous that it doesn't care about the suffering of its people. We are not that evil." He said that the key to resolving Darfur is to bring about a reasonable level of security. He said that UNAMID should be strengthened within the Parameters of UN Resolution 1769, but said that Sudan would be very reluctant to accept a new mechanism, such as a new mandate for UNAMID operations. He lamented that political negotiations with rebel groups "have been a non-starter. We have no-one to tango with." He cautioned that even with improved security, "Darfur will never become what you or I would like it to be. After all, this is Africa."

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¶6. (C) Salahadeen believes the end vision must include the return of IDPs to their homes. "We would like to have no IDPs at all, as prolonged existence leads to dependency and criminalization of the IDP population. Go back they must, develop their own country they must, grow their own food they must. If a reasonable level of security is established, then you can start talking about resettlement, which is the end goal." SE Gration said that he agreed that the end goal should include the return of people to their homes so that the focus can move from relief to development. The SE underlined that the immediate concern is the gap in humanitarian services in the wake of the expulsion of 13 international NGOs as Darfur nears its rainy season and a potential for large numbers of deaths from cholera and meningitis.

¶7. (C) SE Gration called on Salahadeen to support finding ways to minimize deaths resulting from the expulsions of the thirteen INGOs, re-flag some of the expelled aid groups so that they can continue to operate, and allow those aid workers who have been expelled to leave in dignity. Salahadeen countered that "We need to objectively investigate the situation in Darfur and not exaggerate the impact. We have strong objections about what the NGOs are doing and there is something fundamentally wrong with forcing people to accept your charity." Salahadeen said that the regime wants to de-politicize the NGO issue and work with the US through the UN as a buffer. He asked the SE for specific proposals to plug the gap, if different than those of the UN. He said that the regime is not ruling out negotiating on the NGO issue, but would do so based on objective criteria. SE Gration said that he will discuss the issue in meetings at the UN and respond with a proposal that will allow the regime to limit the impact of the aid gaps, while saving face after the President's declaration that the expelled aid groups will not be allowed to return. Salahadeen added that while Sudan has "embarked on the President's call for Sudanization of humanitarian work," International NGOs will still be permitted to work in Sudan "in partnership with local NGOs to build capacity."

18. (C) Salahadeen complained that rebel movements continue to traverse Sudan's long, porous border with Chad, noting "If we can not resolve our issues with Chad, there will never be peace in Darfur." He said the GoS has been unable to police the border. "If you cannot control your border with Mexico, how can we control our border with Chad?" He warned that with the continued traffic of armed rebel groups crossing back and forth, the possibility of Darfur spilling over and becoming a regional problem is very real. He suggested that France could be of greater help in engaging Chad, but admitted that the NCP needed more "creative solutions."

19. (C) COMMENT: Salahadeen's positive reaction to SE Gration's visit and optimistic view for the future of US/Sudan relations (following progress in Darfur and on CPA implementation) is in sync with past calls by regime moderates for a road map for improved ties with the US. Though many in the regime harbor old resentments toward the US for perceived broken promises, Salahadeen is not unique in his belief that turning the page on relations with the US could benefit Sudan profoundly. While Salahadeen, like many in the regime, is fundamentally opposed to the work of most INGOs, he understands that some compromise on NGOs is needed to fill the humanitarian aid gap and, more importantly to Salahadeen, signal to the USG that the NCP is not callous and evil, as it is perceived to be based on its past behavior. SE Gration will discuss possible NGO proposals for the regime during his meetings at the UN that offer the GoS a chance to deliver on improving the humanitarian situation in Darfur and demonstrate that it is serious in its commitment to resolve the Darfur crisis and improve ties with the US. END COMMENT.
FERNANDEZ